

CODE OF PRACTICE



Billing and Metering for Non Domestic Customers



www.niwater.com

As a non-domestic customer of Northern Ireland Water you will pay either measured charges (if you have a meter) or unmeasured charges.

You will only be billed for the services you receive e.g. a water bill if you only have a water supply, or a water and sewerage bill if you are connected to both mains services.

This leaflet explains in more detail:

- Responsibility for the bill;
 - Unmeasured billing;
 - Getting metered;
 - Assessed charges;
 - Measured billing;
 - Leakage and your metered bill;
 - Changes you should tell us about;
 - Water efficiency;
 - What to do if you are not happy with our services; and
- Outlines our promises to you.

We hope that this Code of Practice covers most of the questions you have. For information on the level of annual charges or specialised areas such as flooding, please visit our website. Section 13.3 of this document provides some suggestions of useful further information.

All of our information leaflets and letters are available:

- in Braille;
- in large print; and
- on CD and audio tape.

All information leaflets can be downloaded from our website.

For more information please phone Waterline.

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Waterline 08457 440088

1 Responsibility for the bill

The occupier of the property is responsible for paying the bill, unless there has been another arrangement made with us. If your landlord is responsible for the bill, you need to tell us this in writing, even if this is included in your tenancy arrangement.

Where properties are let for periods of less than 12 months, or are in multiple occupation the owner may be regarded as the occupier.

Please phone us on Billing Line if you think you should be responsible for the bill for your property.

If you are the landlord or owner and you have been paying the bill we will not change this unless someone else accepts the responsibility for payment.

There is more information in our Scheme of Charges on what it means to be the occupier of a property.

1.1 Metered bill responsibility

We prefer to have a single meter for each separate property. Where there is a different metering arrangement a named individual will be responsible for paying the charges.

We can bill an individual or a management company for properties with multiple occupants. This arrangement is known as a Common Billing Agreement (CBA). The individual or management company must pay the bill and recover the costs from the occupiers as they see fit.

When a metered property is sub-divided the owner or developer should provide separate water supplies to each new separately occupiable part. If this hasn't happened and no individual has accepted, in writing, responsibility for the charges, we will bill the person considered to have the principle responsibility e.g. registered landowner.

1.2 Paying your bill

All our bills are issued and must be paid in £ sterling.

Payments can be made in a number of ways:

- By Direct Debit;
 - Web self service;
 - At any bank or building society or via your bank or building society internet or telebanking facilities. This is free in all branches of Northern Bank, charges may be applied by other banks or building societies;
 - At Post Offices – charges may be applied by the Post Office;
 - Debit / credit card payments by phoning the Billing Line on 08458 770030. Credit card payments will be subject to an extra charge. Please see our Scheme of Charges for details. Credit card payments are only accepted against water and sewerage bills;
 - BACS; or
 - Postal payments by cheque.
- Please include the payment slip from the bottom of your bill for these payment types*

1.3 Budget (Meter Payment) Plan

Metered customers with no arrears can set up a payment plan with us. You will pay a fixed amount each month. At the end of each year we will tell you if your account is in credit or debit. We will either credit your account or bill you for the difference. Please see our section on measured billing (section seven) or phone us for more information.

1.4 If you are having problems paying your bill

If you are having problems paying your bill, please phone us on Billing Line. We may be able to arrange a repayment plan to help you to pay your bill. We will not pursue other recovery methods while we are working with you on this and while you continue to make agreed payments on time.

1.5 If you do not pay your bill

Unmeasured bills are paid in advance and should be paid within 28 days. Measured bills are paid in arrears and are due for immediate payment. If you do not pay within the time specified on your bill we will take the following steps:

- We will send you a reminder. This will tell you how much you owe and what will happen if you do not pay or respond.
- If you do not pay or set up a repayment plan we will send a final notice.
- We will then seek to disconnect your supply. If necessary we can separate your supply to allow us to disconnect. We will also do this if you do not stick to an agreed payment plan.
- A court claim may then be issued to recover the debt.
- Any costs associated with recovering the debt will be added to the amount you owe.

If we disconnect your supply for non payment you will have to pay the amount you owe and a reconnection fee before we will restore your supply.

How quickly we take the steps outlined above will depend on whether you are a measured or unmeasured customer. We will explain what will happen next each time we contact you.

1.6 Adjustments to your bill

Every effort is made to bill you correctly. If we bill you incorrectly because of an error by us we can make a retrospective adjustment to your bill and will always do so where it is in your favour.

We can also make retrospective adjustments where a customer intentionally provides or withholds information that affects their charges.

If you have a question about your bill, we will respond within 5 working days. If you have a complaint about your bill, these are usually more complex and we will answer within 10 working days.

If we need to investigate further, we will let you know what we are doing and when we will be able to give you a full answer.

1.7 VAT

VAT may be payable on the water part of your bill only. This applies to both measured and unmeasured bills. VAT applies to any business within Categories 1-5 of the Standard Industry Classification List 1980 (SIC). VAT is zero rated for domestic and other non-domestic customers.

Unless you tell us otherwise we will assume that you are liable for VAT on your bill. If this is incorrect please phone us on Billing Line.

1.8 Customers with multiple accounts

If you receive water and sewerage bills for more than one property, we may be able to combine these onto a single bill. If one of your accounts is in credit, you can ask us to transfer this to settle another account of the same type. Please phone us on Billing Line if you would like us to try to do this.

2 Unmeasured billing

All unmeasured customers designated as non-domestic by Land and Property Services (LPS) will be liable for a bill, regardless of any rates exemption you may have. If you do not have a meter we bill you once a year, usually in April or May.

2.1 Your bill explained

You will only be billed for the services you receive e.g. a water bill if you only have a water supply, or a water and sewerage bill if you are connected to both. Water and sewerage charges are each made up of two parts:

- a standing charge which is fixed. This charge reflects the cost of providing water and sewerage services to your property (e.g. pipework and maintenance); and
- a variable charge based on your Nett Annual Value (NAV). This is set by LPS as the basis for your annual rates bill.

The levels of standing and variable charges are published each year in our Scheme of Charges. Please check our website for more details.

2.2 Domestic allowance

Unmeasured customers are currently charged half of the full amount. Measured customers can get a reduction against the amount of water they use if they pay rates. Known as the domestic allowance it cannot be offered to unmeasured customers so we bill at 50 per cent. Details of this can be found in our Scheme of Charges document available on our website or by phoning Waterline.

2.3 Charges cap

Unmeasured water and sewerage charges have a maximum cap published each year in our Scheme of Charges. Your bill will not be higher than this cap.

An unmeasured bill is made up of 2 pages and looks like this:

Page 1 of 2

northern ireland water

Your Bill for Unmeasured Water and Sewerage Services

Customer Ref:
Property Ref:
Bill Date:
Bill Number:
Bill Type:

Your name & agreed postal billing address appear here. This will be the same as the supply address unless we are told otherwise.

VAT Registration No. 898 7465 37
Address: PO Box 1026 Belfast BT1 9DJ
Fax: 0289 016 8002
E-mail: customer.billing@cs.niwater.com
Web: www.niwater.com

Telephone Helpline:
8am-8pm (Mon-Fri) 0845 877 0030
8am-6pm (Sat)
12-6pm (Sun)

Summary of Charges

Charges are for:
The address the water is supplied to is shown here.

Outstanding Amount before this bill	383.29
Credit Against Previous Bill	426.24cr
Water Charge	0.47
Sewerage Charge	0.53
VAT Charge	0.00

From:
5th January 2010 to 6th January 2010

Net Annual Value of your property is:
Your NAV from LPS appears here.

Closing Balance £41.95cr

The credit shown will be carried forward to your next bill.

Bill Message:
This section will contain any explanatory text for revised bills and state how long you have to pay your bill. This is normally 28 days for unmeasured bills.

bank giro credit

Reference Number: [] Credit account Number: 295 0448 Amount Due (standard fee payable at PO counter) £ 0.00

Cashiers stamp and initials: [] Signature: [] Date: []

This box will contain your billing name & address.

Items: [] Fee: []

95-01-21 £ []

Please do not write or mark below this line and do not fold this counterfoil

0836633301 A4322950448 91 X

Customer reference
This is a unique personal reference number used for all contact with NIW.

Summary
This shows previous bill information and current charges including VAT where applicable.

Amount due
The total of all your charges.

Payment slip
Used for payments at banks etc or sent with cheques for postal payments.

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Your Bill for Unmeasured Water and Sewerage Services

Details of your Bill
Cost of services based on your net annual value

Customer Ref:	
Property Ref:	
Bill Number:	

Charges	Rate	Amount Now Due
Water Charge	Standing Charge	£0.15
	Variable Charge £5,600 @ £0.010330	£0.32
Sewerage Charge	Standing Charge	£0.17
	Variable Charge £5,600 @ £0.011814	£0.36

Charges breakdown
Identifies the individual charges, showing the rate applied and total amount due.



If you have contacted us recently about your bill and we have made changes, the details will appear in the bill message window on the front of the bill.

3 Our promises

- We will bill the occupier unless another arrangement has been set up.
- You will only be billed for the services you receive e.g. a water bill if you only have a water supply, or a water and sewerage bill if you are connected to both mains services.
- We offer a number of different ways to pay your bill.
- If you do not pay your bill or enter into a repayment plan we will send you reminders and may look to disconnect the supply if you still do not pay.
- Unmeasured customers will receive one annual bill based on the NAV as assessed by LPS.
- If we bill you incorrectly because of an error by us we can make a retrospective adjustment to your bill and will always do so where it is in your favour.
- If you have a question about your bill we will respond within 5 working days.
- If you have a complaint about your bill we will answer within 10 working days.
- If it is going to take longer we will let you know what we are doing and when we will be able to give you a full answer.
- If you receive water and sewerage bills for more than one property, you can ask us to combine these onto a single bill. If possible we will do this.
- If one of your water and sewerage accounts is in credit, you can ask us to transfer this to settle another account of the same type.

4 Getting metered

Having a meter fitted allows us to bill you for the water you actually use rather than basing your bill on your NAV. We have the right to install meters for charging purposes on non domestic properties and we prefer to bill our non-domestic customers this way. We are continuing to survey properties to check if meters can be installed.

4.1 What is a water meter?

A water meter records the amount of water that you take from the public water supply to your property. The consumption is measured in cubic metres. One cubic metre is the same as 1000 litres.

The size of the meter we install depends on the size of the pipe supplying the property and the amount of water you will use. For many customers this will be a small meter, about the size of a bag of sugar, for others it may be a large single meter. Some customers with variable consumption requirements may have a combination meter. A combination meter is a single device containing both a small and a large meter. A switch inside the device sends the water through the appropriate size meter depending on flow rate. Each of the two meter dials are separately labelled, and the readings and consumption charges appear as separate lines on your bill, but because they are on a single supply pipe, a single standing charge applies.

Examples of the meters are shown here.



Small Diameter
Meter types



Large Diameter Meter



Combination meter with 2 dials

4.2 How do I get a meter?

If you are not metered and would like to have one fitted please phone us on Waterline and we will:

- Tell you if we have already checked your property and why we have not been able to fit a meter;

or

- Arrange to check if we can fit a meter and if possible have it installed.

We aim to complete our checks and write to you within 3 weeks. If we agree to install a meter this should be done within another 2 weeks.

It is not always possible to fit a meter as this depends on the pipework supplying your property, but where possible we will fit a meter.

4.3 Where will the meter be fitted?

The meter must be installed where it will measure all the water you use, including any outside taps, outbuildings etc, and where it will be protected from damage and easily and safely accessed for reading and maintenance.

We try to fit meters where your stopcock is, and as close as possible to the boundary of your property, as illustrated below.

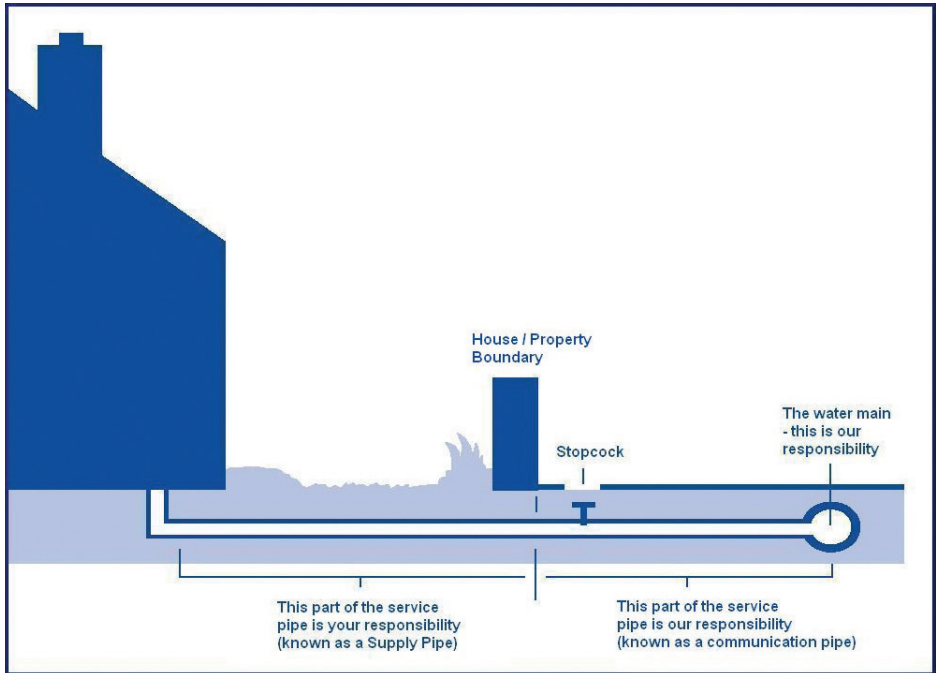


Diagram illustrating typical pipework to a property and outlining the division of responsibilities

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Normally meters will be fitted to individual properties only, unless we have agreed otherwise with you.

The meter is usually fitted in an underground chamber, known as the boundary box, which is typically placed in the footpath or verge. The boundary box also contains the stopcock.

If we can fit the meter at the boundary we will normally go ahead and do this. If this is not possible we will check if the meter can be fitted inside your property if your pipework allows for this.

If you ask us to fit a meter in a different area to where we propose, and it is possible but is more expensive, you will be asked to pay any additional costs associated with this. No charge applies if this is to meet your needs as a customer with a disability, and we do not otherwise charge for fitting a meter.

It will not always be possible to fit the meter where you want. This depends on the pipework and our ability to access the meter. In some cases it may not be technically or economically possible to fit a meter on your supply pipe.

Once we have fitted a meter we will write to you and tell you where your meter is and when to expect your first bill. We aim to do this within 5 weeks of the work being completed. Your metered charges will commence from the date on which we fit a meter. We will not backdate charges if the meter installation was delayed because we couldn't access your property for survey or fitting. Unmeasured charges apply until the meter installation date.

5 Assessed charges

If we cannot fit a meter at your property, you can ask to be billed on assessed charges. Assessed charges take account of water using devices in your property instead of unmeasured charges, which are based on your NAV as set by LPS.

Assessed charges are calculated by us and have two elements:

- the full unmeasured standing charge; and
- a variable charge based on an assessment of water consumption at the property using loading units. Different water using devices have different load unit values. These are detailed in our Scheme of Charges.

If you pay rates for your property then a domestic allowance may be available in accordance with the Scheme of Charges.

We will send you an application form, and will calculate your assessed charges based on the information you provide within 5 days.

We will send you a letter showing what your assessed charge would be and you can decide to accept this or remain on unmeasured charges.

We reserve the right to check the details you provide by inspecting the property.

6 Our promises

- If you are an unmeasured customer you can ask us to fit a meter. We will check if a meter can be installed at your property and fit it if possible. We will try to complete our checks and reply to you within 3 weeks. If a meter can be fitted we will do this within a further 2 weeks.
- If you ask us to fit a meter and we cannot, we will let you know why.
- We do not charge for fitting a meter in our chosen location at your property.
- We will try to contact you before we seek to survey your premises or install a meter. If we have not been able to do this you can ask us to come back at another time.
- If you would like to have the meter installed in a different location, we will try to do this. You will be asked to pay any additional costs for doing the work. This will be payable in advance. If the change is to meet your needs as a customer with a disability we will do this for free.
- Once your meter is installed we will write to you confirming the meter location and when you will receive your first bill. We aim to do this within 5 weeks of the work being completed.
- If we cannot fit a meter to your property you can ask to be billed on assessed charges. We will respond to your application within 5 days of you providing the details we need.

7 Measured billing

Once you have a meter fitted your bill will be based on the readings from it.

7.1 Your bill explained

Metered charges are billed in arrears and payment is due immediately. Details of when your meter is due to be read are sent to you after the meter is installed or when you let us know you have moved into a metered property.

You will only be billed for the services you receive e.g. a water bill if you only have a water supply, or a water and sewerage bill if you are connected to both mains services.

7.2 Billing frequency & estimated bills

Metered customers normally receive a bill every 6 months. We will let you know when to expect a bill from us after your meter is installed, or if we make any change to this.

We aim to read your meter at least twice a year. If we haven't been able to read it when it is time for your bill, we will use an estimate based on your past water use. We will tell you it is an estimate in the bill message box on your bill. If we do not have enough information to do this your bill will be based on the average for your industry classification.

If you receive an estimated bill you can provide us with a meter reading by telephoning our meter reading message line on Billing Line within 7 days of receiving the bill. A new bill will be issued to you based on the reading you provide, normally within 10 days.

At least one bill in any 12 month period will be based on an actual read.

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The front page of the bill will look like this:

Page 1 of 2

northern ireland water

Your bill for Metered Water and Sewerage Services

Your name & agreed postal billing address appear here. This will be the same as the supply address unless we are told otherwise.

Customer Ref:
Bill Number:
Bill Date:
Bill Type:

VAT Registration No. 898 7465 37
Address: PO Box 1026 Belfast BT1 9DJ
Fax: 0289 016 8002
E-mail: customer.billing@cs.niwater.com
Web: www.niwater.com

Telephone Helpline:
8am-8pm (Mon-Fri) 0845 877 0030
8am-6pm (Sat)
12-6pm (Sun)

Summary of Charges

Charges are for:
The address the water is supplied to is shown here.

Outstanding Amount before this bill	109.61
Credit Against Previous Bill	109.61 cr
Water Charge	35.17
Sewerage Charge	0.00
VAT Charge	0.00

From:
26th January 2011 to 5th August 2011

Your Bill Frequency is:
Half Yearly

Amount Now Due **£35.17**

See overleaf for how and where to pay

Bill Message:
This section will contain any explanatory text for revised bills.

bank giro credit

135
32

Reference Number

Credit account Number 295 0448

Amount Due (Standard fee payable at PO counter) £ 35.17

CHEQUE ACCEPTABLE

Northern Bank Ltd
Donegal Square North, Belfast BT1 5GJ
Water Service 31064356

CASH

CHEQUE

95-01-21

£

Items Fee

Please do not write or mark below this line and do not fold this counterfoil

0615884501 A4322950448 91 X

Customer reference
This is a unique personal reference number used for all contact with NIW.

Summary
This shows previous bill information and current charges including VAT where applicable.

Amount due
The total of all your charges.

Payment slip
Used for payments at banks etc or sent with cheques for postal payments.

And the back of the bill will look like this:

Page 2 of 2

Your bill for Metered Water and Sewerage Services

Customer Ref:
Bill Number:

Meter Information

Meter reference: This is the unique series of numbers and letters as it appears on your meter.
Serial Number:
Meter location: This is a description of where your meter can be found.

Consumption Details

	Date	Reading	Consumption M ³	Reading Type
Present Reading	05/08/2011	2102	202	Customer Reading
Previous Reading	26/01/2011	1900		
Rateable Water Allowance			-202	
Net Chargeable Water Volume			0	

Allowances
If a customer is receiving an allowance it is shown in this section and subtracted from the gross consumption.

Meter readings
This shows the current and previous meter reads with consumption used between the specified dates.

Details of your Bill

Charges	Consumption	Rate	Amount Now Due
Water Volume Rate	0	1.0130	£0.00
Water Volume Rate	0	1.0424	£0.00
Water Standing Charge 20mm	064 days at	66.00 per year	£11.57
Water Standing Charge 20mm	127 days at	68.00 per year	£23.60
VAT		At 0.00%	£0.00

Charges breakdown
Identifies the individual charges, shows the rate applied and total amount due. Some bills may cross over two financial years therefore the old and new charges are shown separately for the applicable period of time.

If you have contacted us recently about your bill and we have made changes, the details will appear in the bill message window on the front of the bill.

7.3 Water charges

Your water bill will be made up of 2 parts:

- a standing charge which is fixed; and
- a variable charge known as the volumetric charge, which is based on your water use.

The standing charge is a fixed charge which includes the costs of providing a metered water supply (e.g. pipes, meter maintenance and reading and billing costs). The charge depends on the size of the supply pipe within your property.

The volumetric charge is calculated by multiplying your water use in cubic metres for the billing period by the price per cubic metre.

You will be liable for a standing charge on each meter you have, plus the registered usage, less any allowances which you are entitled to.

On combination meters the total recorded usage on both dials shows your consumption but a single standing charge applies as there is only one supply pipe.

7.4 Pipe size and your standing charge

The size of the supply pipe to your property was specified by whoever originally applied for the water connection to your property, normally the builder or architect. If you feel that your water usage needs have changed significantly since the property was built you can replace your supply pipe with a smaller one. This is at your own cost. It is your responsibility to confirm that this would be suitable for all your requirements and change the pipe from the meter to the first point of use within your property, please refer to the diagram on page 17.

Once we have confirmed that this has been done you would be billed a standing charge on the basis of your new supply pipe size as outlined in our Scheme of Charges.

7.5 Sewerage charges

Your sewerage bill will also be made up of 2 parts:

- a standing charge – which is fixed and based on your water supply pipe size; and
- a variable charge – which is based on the water you use. To do this we assume that 95% of the water we supply is returned to the sewerage system.

7.6 Non-return to sewer allowance

If your business uses water in its processes and more than 5% is not returned to the sewer in any way you can ask us to review your non-return to sewer allowance. There will be a charge for this review which will be refunded if we approve your application. Please phone us on Waterline for an application form or more information.

7.7 Trade effluent

Some non-domestic customers may be billed for trade effluent, as well as normal sewerage charges. Trade effluent is any liquid, either with or without particles of matter in suspension in the liquid, which is wholly or partly produced in the course of any trade or industry carried on at trade premises.

Trade effluent customers are billed based on the strength of the effluent and the level of treatment required. The charges for trade effluent are available in our Scheme of Charges and more information can also be found in the trade effluent application pack on our website.

7.8 Private water supplies and your bill

We do not charge for any water which you draw from a private supply or borewell. If you use a borewell supply, or grey or rainwater harvesting, these systems must be installed to comply with the Water Fittings Regulations (see also section 10.10) and you must tell us you have them. We may check that these are installed correctly and we will also make sure we are billing you correctly for the services you use.

If you are connected to the mains sewerage system you are liable for a sewerage charge and we may need to meter your private supply to understand how much you are putting in to the sewerage system. If you maintain a water supply from our network as a back-up you will be liable for charges for that too. This will be either an unmeasured charge or metered charge if you have a meter on that supply.

7.9 Domestic allowance

If you pay rates for your metered property, a domestic allowance may be available. This is subtracted from the volume recorded by the meter, before calculating the volumetric water and sewerage charges. Details of the current allowance are set out in the Scheme of Charges.

This allowance will normally apply to each individually rated property served. Properties with a bulk or shared supply may have more than one allowance applied. If you pay reduced rates, e.g. for caravan parks with static units, the domestic allowances on both water and sewerage will be applied at a similarly reduced rate. The domestic allowance does not affect the standing charge, and you will still be liable for this on each meter you have. If you think you are eligible for the allowance, phone us on Billing Line. We may require proof of your rateable status to confirm eligibility.

The domestic allowance may be backdated to the date you can show that you started paying rates, up to a maximum of 6 years. Sewerage charges were only introduced in 2008 so any sewage allowance can only date from then.

7.10 High consumption alert

A significant increase in your consumption may indicate leakage on your supply. If we find that a meter reading shows an unusual and significant increase we will alert you to this usually by writing to you.

It is your responsibility to check for and repair any leaks. Please see our section on leakage and your metered bill.

7.11 How to read your meter

You should only try to read your meter if it is safe and practical to do so.

To take a reading, first locate your meter. If you cannot remember where your meter has been fitted, please check the description on your bill (as shown on page 23 of this document) or phone us on Billing Line. We will be able to provide a description of the location and send you a map of its location if needed. External meters are usually located inside a metal or plastic box in the ground at the boundary of your property.

The cover of the meter box can usually be opened using a flat screwdriver. The meter box will have been installed with a pad or block of insulating foam inside, which should be removed to expose the meter. This foam helps to protect your meter from frost, so please remember to replace it before you close the lid again.

It is common to see water in the meter chamber, this is usually rainwater or groundwater. If you find water in the chamber after a long dry spell and your usage is high, it may indicate that you have a leak. Some meters may have a flip lid above the dial which you will have to lift to take a reading. If not you may need to clean dirt from the meter face.

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If the glass on top of the meter is cloudy with condensation you can usually clear this by tapping gently on the glass with a blunt tool e.g. the plastic or wooden end of a screwdriver. You may need a torch to help you read the meter, as it will be some way below ground.

Each water meter has its own unique serial number and this number is shown on your bill. Please make sure you have located the correct meter by checking that the serial number matches the one shown on your most recent bill.

The dial will vary for different types of meter but should look broadly like the one shown here:



Serial number

This should be as it appears on your bill and may contain numbers only or letters and numbers.

To take a meter reading you only need to read the black dials on the meter which show full cubic metres of water used. Please ignore the red dials which show decimal fractions of a cubic meter.

If you have opened a lid on the pavement or roadway, it is important that, once you finish reading the meter, the lid is properly closed, with the foam frost protection back in place, to help ensure that the meter is adequately protected from any damage.

7.12 What if my meter is damaged?

If you notice that your meter or the boundary box chamber is damaged please phone us on Waterline and we will assess the urgency of this and arrange a repair if this is necessary.

The meter and all associated fittings belong to Northern Ireland Water. After installation, we shall be responsible for maintaining or replacing the meter, unless it is damaged or misused by you or through your negligence. In this case, you will be liable for any repair charges.

7.13 Meter accuracy

The accuracy of a water meter is confirmed by the manufacturer and Trading Standards before it leaves the factory. However if you think the meter supplying your property is faulty please phone us on Billing Line. We will visually confirm that the meter is functioning at no charge.

If you are still unhappy you can ask us to have it tested. There is a fee for the meter test so we recommend that you carefully check for leaks or any other reasons for unusual consumption before asking for the test. The fee depends on the size of your meter and must be paid in advance. Details of the fees can be found in our Scheme of Charges available on our website.

If a meter is not accurately measuring your consumption it is more likely to under record (record less than you are using) than over record the amount of water used. If you decide to have the meter tested we will tell you about the payment procedure and ask you to apply in writing. The test will determine if the meter complies with the Measuring Equipment (Cold Water Meters) Regulations 2006, and we will send you a copy of the results. A meter which has been in service is considered to be recording with acceptable accuracy if the test shows consumption within +/-2.5% of actual consumption at the nominal (normal) flow rate, which relates to the size of the meter.

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- If the meter is found to be working correctly, we will keep the charge for the test.
- If the meter fails the test, the charge will be returned.
- If you have been over or under-charged as a result of the faulty meter, we will adjust your bill accordingly. We will normally assume that your two most recent bills have been affected by the fault.
- If the last two bills have been based on estimated readings the charges will be amended on the basis of retrospective application of consumption details determined from meter readings taken by us from the replacement meter.

We have to take the meter away to test it. We will replace the meter while the tests are carried out. Usually due to the costs involved in changing a meter, we will not reinstate your original meter, regardless of the test results.

7.14 Can I go back to unmeasured charging?

No. Once a meter is fitted on your property we will not remove that meter or bill you on the basis of an unmeasured charge unless the meter is not fully capturing all the water going into your property, or our survey information has been incorrect. You can not change back to unmeasured charges.

You and any subsequent occupiers of the premises will be liable for measured charges.

If you wish to have a supply disconnected you can phone us on Waterline, and we will do so free of charge, but a reconnection fee will apply if the supply is later reinstated. For more information on the charges for reconnections please see our Scheme of Charges document.

8 Our promises

- We will issue bills to measured (metered) customers every 6 months unless we have agreed something different with you.
- If your business uses water in its processes and more than 5% is not returned to the sewer in any way from your property you can ask us to review your non-return to sewer allowance.
- We may meter any private water supplies if you are connected to the mains sewer.
- We will apply a domestic allowance to your account if you are eligible and apply for one.
- We will aim to read your meter twice per year.
- At least one bill in any 12 month period will be based on an actual read.
- If you receive an estimated bill, you can provide us with an actual reading within 7 days and we will re-issue the bill within 10 days.
- When we read your meter and your consumption shows an unusual and significant increase we will alert you to this, usually in writing.
- If you cannot find your meter, please phone us on Billing Line. We will provide a description and a map of your meter's location if you need it.
- If you tell us your meter, or meter chamber is damaged we will assess this and arrange a repair.
- We will maintain the meter and replace it if we find it is damaged or has stopped working.
- If you think your meter is not working properly, we will test it for a fee. If you are correct we will refund the fee and amend your bill.
- If there has been an error on your bill we will back date adjustments, where appropriate, if this is in your interests.
- We will not remove a meter unless it is not properly capturing all the water supplied to your property or you request to have the supply disconnected.

9 Leakage and your metered bill

9.1 Checking for leaks before we install a meter

When we install a meter on an existing supply, we will check to see if there is any leakage from your private supply pipe. We will repair any leak free of charge provided we can do so without any further digging. If additional digging is required you will be responsible for finding and repairing the leak yourself.

Normally we will not start to record your water consumption through the meter until the leak has been repaired.

9.2 Finding a leak on your supply

We recommend you keep a check on the amount of water you are using by taking regular meter readings, particularly if you have a long supply pipe, or following periods of exceptional, or prolonged cold weather. If your recorded consumption suddenly increases this may indicate a leak on your pipework.

We recommend that you carry out the following checks:

1. For Underground Pipes

- Locate meter.
- Close internal stop tap.
- If meter is still recording a flow, investigate further: and
- Look for patches of unusually damp ground.

2. For Internal Plumbing

- During a period of no water use, check meter.
- If meter is recording a flow, close internal stop tap.
- If meter stops recording a flow, check internal pipework and appliances.

For more information on dealing with leaks check our Code of Practice on Leakage, available on our website or by phoning us on Waterline.

9.3 Liability for leakage costs on water

Where a leak occurs between the meter and point of use, water will be recorded as consumption on the meter and may result in a high bill. All water supplied through a meter for non-domestic purposes, whether consumed or lost through leakage, will be billed. This includes where there is a short period of unusually high consumption which then reduces. Often this can be due to a previous estimated read which was too low.

Unless a test shows that the meter is not recording properly (see section 7.13 on meter accuracy) this will be used as the basis for your bill.

9.4 Liability for leakage costs on sewage

The sewerage charges on a bill are directly linked to the volume of water recorded, assuming 95% of water supplied is returned as sewage, unless we have agreed a different Non-Return to Sewer allowance.

If there has been a leak you can apply to have the sewerage charges on your bill adjusted to take account of the water which leaked and did not reach the sewer. This can be requested each time a leak occurs, provided it can be demonstrated that any previous leaks were properly repaired.

The sewerage charges on the bill will be averaged for the period of the leak, based on your previous normal consumption records. This is subject to the following conditions:

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- The leak occurred on underground, or hidden internal pipework within your property boundary;
- The leak has been fixed within 4 weeks of the date it was found;
- There is no evidence that the leak has been caused by your negligence or wilful damage;
- A claim is made within 6 weeks of the date the leak was fixed, or the date the bill (based on an actual read) issues, whichever is later; and
- Any allowance granted will relate to the period from the date of the last bill (based on an actual read) until the date of its repair.

It is your responsibility to fix any leak on your pipework as soon as you find it. If you do not own your property, your landlord may be responsible for fixing the leak, but the bill payer will still be liable, even if the leak is on a shared supply pipe within the property. If necessary you should ask your landlord, or the property owner to carry out the repair.

If the leak occurs on a portion of the pipe that Northern Ireland Water has responsibility for (e.g. between the meter and your property boundary), or as a result of damage caused by us or our contractors, both the water and sewerage elements of the bill will be averaged.

9.5 Leakage on the domestic part of a mixed use supply

If you have a single metered supply providing water to a non-domestic and domestic mixed use property, and a leak occurs on the domestic part of the supply you can apply to have both the water and sewerage elements of your bill adjusted. The same conditions apply as above, and you will have to show that the leak was repaired. We may visit your property for you to show us where the leak had been and confirm that this was on the domestic portion. If leaks happen again we may require you to separate the supplies.

10 Changes you should tell us about

If you make changes to your property you may need to tell us. Below are details of changes you should tell us about.

10.1 Building over infrastructure

Building over a public watermain is NOT permitted. Specific approval is required to build over or near sewers.

If you do not get consent such works constitute an offence.

If you think that any building work you are starting is near any of our watermains or sewers please contact our Developer Services Team immediately on Waterline.

10.2 Works affecting your meter

If you need to carry out work which affects your meter please let us know or you may be committing an offence. The cost of any work which we need to do to replace or repair the meter as a result of an offence is recoverable from the offender.

If you need to have the meter moved, we may be able to do this. There will be a charge depending on what work we need to carry out. We will assess if the work is possible and give you an estimate on request.

We will move the meter, if possible to do so, for free to meet your needs as a customer with a disability.

10.3 Change of use

You should tell us if you change from non-domestic to domestic status. Please phone us on Billing Line and we will discuss this with you. We may need a copy of your rates bill as proof of your domestic status with LPS. If you do not contact us before the change of use, the date you contact us will be the date the account is amended, unless you can provide proof of an earlier change. In that case we will backdate any refund appropriately.

10.4 Sub division of premises

If you are sub-dividing your property you need to provide a separate water supply to each part of the property which has a different occupier, and apply for a new connection for each of these. After connection each supply will be separately billed to the respective occupiers. For more information on new connections please phone our Developer Services Team on Waterline or check our website.

10.5 Co-joining buildings

If you join two buildings together you will be liable for charges based on both original supplies, including standing charges, unless you contact us to have one of them disconnected. This applies to both measured and unmeasured properties.

10.6 Moving or ceasing trading

You are responsible for notifying us if you are moving premises or ceasing trading. You need to tell us at least two working days before you leave or you will be liable for any charges up to the date of whichever happens first:

- 28 days after you tell us;
- The day when the meter would normally next be read; or
- The day when someone else tells us that they are taking responsibility for the supply.

You should also phone us on the day you leave to provide a final reading. We will close your account on the basis of a meter reading you provide, or if you cannot do that, on the basis of an estimate if you agree.

10.7 Demolition

Please inform us if you are demolishing a non domestic property so we can disconnect the supply to prevent leakage on the site after you leave. We will close your account and ensure you are not billed for any use after the demolition date. If you do not contact us you may still be liable for costs as outlined in section 10.6.

10.8 Customer requested disconnections

We will not remove a meter unless it has been incorrectly installed or you request a disconnection. This means that we will stop supplying water to the property. There is no charge for disconnection. There will be a cost if you later want to have the water supply reconnected. You will be liable for charges until any disconnection is carried out.

10.9 What if I want to use automatic meter reading?

We do not currently use automatically read meters (using a radio signal) on customer accounts. Some customers ask to use their own monitoring systems on our meters. Each case is individual, and the work required depends on the age and type of the meter serving your property. If you want to use your own automatic systems on our meters please phone us on Waterline to discuss your, and our, requirements. There will be a charge for managing your request. Please see our Scheme of Charges for more information.

If you install equipment without seeking prior permission this may constitute an offence of tampering with a meter.

10.10 Water Fittings Regulations compliance

Any works now done on plumbing systems or water fittings must satisfy the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. This is the responsibility of the owners, occupiers and plumbers carrying out the work. We have a guidance leaflet on the Water Fittings Regulations available on our website or by phoning Waterline.

11 Our Promises

- We will check for leaks on your supply when we fit a meter and fix it for free if we can access it within our excavation.
- We will provide advice on how to find leakage on your supply.
- We will bill you for all water consumed through your meter, less any allowances you are entitled to.
- If you have had a leak on your supply you can apply to have the sewerage part of your bill adjusted.
- We will provide advice on building near a watermain or sewer.
- We will move your meter, if possible, if you need to carry out works that affect it. There will be a cost depending on the work required.
- If you need your meter moved to meet your needs as a customer with a disability, we will do this for free, if it is possible.
- We will close your account if you are moving, providing you give us two days notice.
- We will disconnect your supply at no charge if you ask us, but there will be a charge for reconnection.
- We will provide advice on compliance with the Water Fittings Regulations.
- If you want to use automatic meter reading equipment on our meter we will discuss this with you.

12 Water Efficiency

Having a water meter fitted means that your charges are directly related to the amount of water you use.

Metering encourages a greater awareness of the water that you use and can help you to use it more efficiently and budget for your bill.

It is worth noting that a dripping tap can waste up to 30 litres of water a day! That could cost you over £25 per year on your bill.

For most businesses toilet and urinal flushing typically make up 63% of water use, so improvements in the efficiency of plumbing devices will significantly reduce the amount of water wasted. Below are some ways of making your plumbing appliances more efficient.

Taps

- Fix dripping taps and encourage employees not to leave taps running.
- Fit tap aerators or spray heads.
- Fit self closing, push or infrared operated taps.

WCs

- Check that water is not running into the bowl between flushes.
- Check that overflows are not running.
- Replace older cisterns with smaller modern ones, this may mean the pan needs to be changed too.
- Retrofit toilets with dual flush.

Urinals

- Adjust the time between flushes.
- Switch urinals off when your business is closed.
- Use a motion sensor so urinals only flush when used e.g. not at night time.
- Waterless urinals are another option, but remember that they do need maintenance.

Showers

- Fit push buttons to showers.
- Fit aerating shower heads.
- Use a shower timer to increase awareness of usage.

For more tips on water efficiency please see our Commercial Premises Water Audit leaflet available on www.niwater.com or by phoning us on Waterline.

13 What to do if you are not happy with our services

We are committed to giving you the service you expect, all day, every day.

If you are disappointed with our service, we want to hear from you. This gives us the chance to put things right for you and make improvements so that other customers may benefit.

Our contact details are:

Northern Ireland Water

PO Box 1026

Belfast,

BT1 9DJ



Email: waterline@niwater.com



Fax: 028 9016 8002



Phone Waterline: 08457 440088



Phone Billing Line: 08458 770030



Website: www.niwater.com

You can ask for a free copy of our complaints procedure or you can download it from www.niwater.com

13.1 Our promises

Answering your questions

- When you call we will answer the phone within 30 seconds
- If you phone us we will try to deal with your questions straight away
- If you write to us we will reply within 10 working days
- If we need to investigate your complaint we will explain what we need to do and we will write to you within 10 working days

Keeping appointments

- When we make an appointment with you we will tell you whether we will visit before or after 1pm.
- We will try to keep all appointments. If we need to cancel or change an appointment, we will give you at least 24 hours' notice.
- If an emergency stops us from keeping an appointment, we will try to let you know.

13.2 Independent help and advice from the Consumer Council

If you are not happy with how we have dealt with your complaint or would like independent advice, contact the Consumer Council.

Consumer Council
Elizabeth House
116 Hollywood Road
Belfast, BT4 1NY



Phone: 0800 121 6022



Text Relay Service: 028 9067 2488



Fax: 028 9065 7701



Email: complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk



Website: www.consumercouncil.org.uk

13.3 Further information

This leaflet is part of a set of leaflets about our codes of practice. These leaflets give you information about us and our services.

All our codes are approved by the Utility Regulator. The other leaflets in the set include the following.

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- ‘Our Customer Charter’ – explains our promises to you.
- ‘Sewerage services for domestic customers’ – provides information about the sewerage system, who is responsible for pipework, flooded sewers, new connections and our right to enter your property.
- ‘Dealing with leaks’ – provides information on our code of practice on leaks and who owns pipes.
- ‘Our complaints procedure’ – provides information on who to contact and how we will manage your complaint.
- ‘Customer Care Register’ – provides information on a range of free services we offer customers with particular needs.

We also offer a range of other leaflets, such as ‘Using Water Wisely’ and ‘Lead in Drinking Water’.

To ask for any of the free leaflets shown above, please phone Waterline or visit www.niwater.com

13.4 Other useful contacts

Our Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating NI Water.

The Utility Regulator

Queens House

14 Queen Street

Belfast, BT1 6ED

 Phone: 028 9031 1575

 Fax: 028 9031 1740

 Email: info@uregni.gov.uk

 Website: www.uregni.gov.uk

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Northern Ireland Water

PO Box 1026

Belfast

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 **Waterline: 08457 440088**

 **Text Relay Service:**
08457 440088

 **Email: waterline@niwater.com**

 **www.niwater.com**

northern ireland
water
